



NEWS RELEASE

December 13, 2002

Agents Rescue 3 Immigrants From Trunk of Car

Two Suspects Arrested & Charged With Aggravated Alien Smuggling

McALLEN, Texas - Chief Patrol Agent Jose E. Garza announces that Border Patrol Agents assigned to the Kingsville Station Traffic Checkpoint located on Highway 77 North in Sarita, Texas, found three undocumented immigrants in the trunk of a car Saturday afternoon in an apparent smuggling attempt.

At approximately 4:30 p.m., Kingsville Agents assigned to the Traffic Checkpoint in Sarita, Texas, discovered the apparent smuggling attempt after a canine alerted to the trunk of a gray 2002 Dodge Stratus. The vehicle, occupied by two females United States citizens and an infant who was later identified as the Grandson of the driver, was referred to secondary inspection after the canine alerted positively to presence of narcotics or humans concealed inside the trunk.

Upon opening the trunk, three male Mexican nationals were discovered under a layer of blankets. The three males, one age 17, one age 21 and one age 40, were sweating profusely when discovered, but fortunately none of them required any medical attention. Enclosed in a confined space with no ventilation could result in dehydration and suffocation if exposed to such conditions for extended periods. Penalties and fines for alien smuggling increase if the court determines that there were aggravating circumstances such as injuries or deaths.

The two females were arrested and charged with 8 USC 1324, Conspiring to Transport Undocumented Immigrants. Both were to be arraigned today in Federal Court in Brownsville, Texas.

In fiscal year 2001, there were 30 reported deaths of persons believed to be immigrants in the McAllen Sector. Although 50% of those deaths were reported as drowning victims, 9 were of unknown causes, 5 were related to heat exposure and 1 to a motor vehicle accident. Agents rescued 150 persons in fiscal year 2001; the majority of the persons rescued were undocumented immigrants.

The potential for tragedy was great, but alert and inquisitive agents utilizing various investigative tools prevented a tragedy from occurring that day.

~ USBP ~